

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: SAM KAPU, retired golf starter

Sam Kapu, Hawaiian, born June 23, 1910 in Maui, came to Honolulu in 1918 because his stepfather joined the Army during World War I. He has little recollection of his parents, who died when he was young.

He grew up in Magoon Block; he lived with other boys and dove for coins. He attended Pohukaina Elementary School. He excelled in sports--football, baseball, volleyball, and swimming. During the second World War, he was a football coach.

Sam worked for the City & County Refuse Department in 1931. In 1941, he worked for the Board of Water Supply for one year; then in construction. For 27 years, he worked as a starter at Ala Wai golf course. He retired in 1978.

## TIME LINE

1910	birth: Maui
1918	moved to Kakaako
1926	attended Pohukaina Elementary School
1932	married
1942	moved out of Kakaako
1950	golf starter, Ala Wai Golf Club
1978	retired

Tape No. 3-17-1-77

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Sam Kapu (SK)

October 17, 1977

Ala Wai Golf Course, Honolulu

BY: Perry Nakayama (PN)

PN: This is an interview with Sam Kapu on October 17, 1977, at Ala Wai Golf Course. First, maybe you can tell me a little bit about your life, where you were born, your life on Maui... (Tape distortion) Do you know why your parents came to Honolulu?

SK: Well, my stepfather joined the Army for the First World War. That's why we came to Honolulu.

PN: Oh, oh, I see. You said they died young. Do you know what happened to them?

SK: Just sickness.

PN: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

SK: We had three brothers and one sister. Two brothers died.

PN: What happened to them?

SK: One, old age; and one into one car accident.

PN: You said you were living in Magoon Block. (After parents died.)

SK: That's right.

PN: How many of you were living there:

SK: Oh, about 10 to 14 in a room. And well, we don't all sleep in the room. We sleep some in the room, some on the veranda, lanai they call it.

PN: These are all boys around your age?

SK: Yeah. We all sleep on the floor.

PN: How did you folks, you know, get together and...

SK: Well, we all from Kakaako. We're the gang that dive for coins when the ship come in and go out.

PN: Well, how much, you know, rent would you folks have to pay?

SK: Those days was, I think, ah, \$12 a month in Magoon Block. So, maybe 10 or 12 of us, we'd all put in a dollar a month. And we don't have to pay electricity nor water. Just the rent.

PN: Where did you folks eat like that?

SK: All the restaurant. Downtown, Bethel Street, down Kakaako...

PN: So, you folks didn't cook any of your meals or anything?

SK: No. Don't have to cook because stew rice was 15 cents. A piece of steak was 35 cents. Well, we had enough money from the diving for coins. Well, we eat regular.

PN: So, you survive because of your "nickel and dime diving," you call it?

SK: Yeah. A nickel was a nickel those days.

(PN laughs)

PN: Not like nowadays?

SK: Not like now.

PN: So how long did you live at Magoon Block?

SK: Well, we lived there until about 1932. Then I got married and I live in a house with my wife and son.

PN: What about like washing clothes and ironing clothes? How did you guys go about that?

SK: Well, we used to all meet down the old Healan Boathouse. That's where the coast guard is. And we used to wash our clothes down there and then, when we go to bed we put our clothes on the--hang 'em up. We put our clothes under the mat, and use the mat for iron. That's all.

PN: Oh yeah? You would be sleeping on what kind of....just a mattress?

SK: Yeah, these, ah, regular mat, not mattress, mat.

PN: Like lau hala mat or something like that?

SK: Yeah.

PN: Was there a leader among you, you folks living?

SK: No. No leader.

PN: Just bunch you folks just hung around?

SK: Yeah, just a bunch of us get together.

PN: What happened to the other boys? You know, their parents like that?

SK: Well, I don't know about their parents and I don't know where they are now. I think most of 'em they die. It's not only 10 or 12 of us. There's more than that because, you know, there's almost a whole gang of 'em because everybody get their own room, eh? You know? Maybe 24, 30 like that.

PN: Oh, you'd have maybe two, three rooms?

SK: Yeah.

PN: Oh, I see. Who else lived in this Magoon Block?

SK: Oh, to tell you the truth, was so long ago I even forget the name. But, I can name a few. The Manawai brothers. The Kalili brothers. John Kealii. You know, there's so many of 'em, you know.

PN: What about, you know, was there other families living there also?

SK: Well, you see, lot of them [the boys] have family living Kakaako. But, they rather stay with the boys.

PN: You said you went to Pohukaina School?

SK: Pohukaina School.

PN: When you came from Maui, did you go to Pohukaina straight?

SK: Yeah, from Maui straight to Kakaako.

PN: How did you like school?

SK: Better than now, I think.

(Laughter)

SK: You know, we used to have a teacher there, Mother Waldron.

PN: Yeah, I heard of her.

SK: When any of the boys or girls get out of line, what she used to do, she won't lick us, she just spank us. She would make us hold our hands out



with our fists closed and she gets the ruler and hit the hell out of our knuckles. We don't complain because we know we wrong. And then we go back school the next day. We will. We can't complain to our parents. We go home complain to them, we get licking.

(PN laughs)

SK: So, we just take it, that's all.

PN: Was there any other teachers like that also?

SK: Well, not as strict as she is. She was the strictest.

PN: What about, as far as lunch like that. How would you guys get along?

SK: You know, to tell you the truth, we never had cafeteria those days. You got to go whatever you can get your parents send you to lunch with. That's your lunch.

PN: What about you, because you didn't have parents? You folks live at Magoon Block.

SK: Well, we get nickel, dime like that. We go out and eat. We can buy big package of peanuts for nickel.

PN: You eat that for lunch?

SK: Yeah.

PN: What else would you eat for lunch like that?

SK: Well, whatever we can get. I don't remember too well, but...

PN: The stores around there, you just...

SK: Oh, plenty stores. All, everything cheap. We used to have a peanut factory down there. That's what we do. Had Buck's Bakery. We used to go over there buy bread, had nice sweetbread.

PN: You folks called yourselves "Nickel and Dime Divers?"

SK: No. Well, our name was Hawaiian Divers. The majority of us was Hawaiians.

PN: That was the name of your guys' club like that?

SK: Yeah.

PN: Maybe you can tell me more about this divers...

SK: Well, see, we call ourself the "Hawaiian Divers." We used to have a softball team. And the coach was the former policeman, Bill Smith, whose son is now with the Department of Parks and Recreation. He was a former Olympic champion.

PN: So, when was this club formed? When you folks were all gathering at...

SK: Oh, about 1931.

PN: 1931? You were diving way before then?

SK: I was diving about 1927.

PN: How would you guys know when the boats come in?

SK: We have schedule, because we know when the boats are coming in. The Matson ship, President Line.

PN: What would you folks do? Just go down to the piers?

SK: Oh yeah. They used to have a streetcar riding from the "car" (streetcar) barn. You know, on South Street. And the track used to go right down to the old Healani Boathouse, where Honolulu Iron Works is. We used to jump in the back on the fender and catch it and go down early in the morning. See?

PN: You wouldn't pay anything?

SK: No. We don't pay anything. The conductor sees us but he's the only one on so he cannot come in the back and chase us.

PN: When would these boats come in? About what time?

SK: Oh, 7, 8 o'clock. And they leave about 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

PN: You folks would be diving all day?

SK: Well, we dive in the morning. Whatever money we would make we go have breakfast. Then we go down Bethel Street. Hang around Bethel Street till about, maybe 3 o'clock. Then we go back down the pier and we swim for the boat that goes out.

PN: How much would you make a day?

SK: About dollar, dollar quarter. The good divers make about \$2, \$3.

PN: How many of you folks would be diving at one time?

SK: Oh! Let's see, about what....10 to 15.

PN: About the average number of boats a week would be what?

SK: I think they had boats about three times a week, I think.

PN: Three times a week? And what about school like that? You folks would play hooky from school or something?

SK: No. You see, when school hours, we go early, we swim for the boats. School used to start 8:30 see. And from there we go to school. But, summer month we don't go to school. We go down Bethel Street, hang around.

PN: Oh, that was the peak tourist season, I guess, during the summer?

SK: Well, to us it was all year 'round. You know, because as long the boat come in we know we going to make a few cents for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

PN: So, there'd be about what, 10, 12 of you folks diving at one time?

SK: Ten, 12, sometime more. All depend if guys want to make a few cents. They go down swim. Because the divers among us is not only us, you know. There's almost the whole Kakaako section. The young guys.

PN: Oh. Total of how many?

SK: Well, about 30. But we all don't go the same time.

PN: Oh, oh, oh, I see. So, your bunch would go a certain time?

SK: No, not my bunch, but, you know, whoever wants to go they can go anytime. And we control the pier from the old Healani Boathouse, exactly Pier Two up to Pier Nine.

PN: That was you folks...

SK: That was for the Kakaako group. The Palama group from Pier Ten and over.

PN: Oh, there'd be two groups, then, down there?

SK: Yeah. Palama gang.

PN: Who would determine who could come in and swim like that?

SK: The boys themselves.

PN: And you would know who's from Kakaako and who's from Palama?

SK: Yeah. We know everybody.

PN: Supposing somebody from, say, Palama came into your folks' district?

SK: You know what they find? Their clothes "chew beefed."

PN: What?

SK: Chew beefed, tied 'em up.

PN: Yeah.

SK: We tie up their clothes and we shi-shi on 'em.

(PN laughs)

SK: For they cannot bite it and take it out, eh? The smell be on the clothes, eh?

PN: This would happen often?

SK: No. Once we catch 'em, once we do it, pau. They know already that they not welcome there.

(PN Laughs)

PN: What about wahines? Would they have any wahine divers?

SK: No. Those days were, well, they never have too much wahines like now. I guess the ratio was about four to one with girls.

PN: Oh, but there would be some?

SK: Yeah, but they know they're, you know....

PN: What kind of boats would you work on?

SK: Matson Line. Dollar Ships.

PN: Oh, that's the name of the boat.

SK: Yeah, the Dollar Line. They call it "the Dollar Line."

PN: What about interisland ships like that?

SK: No, we don't go for no interisland. We don't dive. Just the big ships.

PN: Where did you learn how to swim like that?

SK: You got to learn how to swim when you live down there if you expect to eat.

(PN Laughs)

SK: You know?

PN: Nobody taught you how to swim or anything?

SK: Down there everybody learn their own. They learn how to swim. They learn how to dive off from the ship by themself.

PN: Did anybody get hurt or drown?

SK: Nobody yet. As far as I know.

PN: Would you folks meet any of the tourist like that, who threw you coins? Would they come down, maybe, to see or take pictures with you folks?

SK: No, no, no.

PN: They just throw from the boat?

SK: From the boat.

PN: Would you folks have any fights among yourselves trying to fight for the money?

SK: Well, when you go out in the water, for a nickel is a big money those days. The best swimmer and the best diver get it. We don't fight but we push each other away to get at the coin. And if you not a fast swimmer and a good diver, you going to starve. Got to swim like hell for it.

PN: What did you folks do with your money? Besides buying food or clothes like that, did you folks gamble with it or anything?

SK: Well, we don't gamble those days. Because you don't make too much to gamble. You know? The most your mouth going hold coins, dime, nickel, maybe about two, two and a half [dollars]. See, we put the money in our mouth when we diving for coins. Whoever get the coins, put it in his mouth and go again.

PN: Oh, you folks wouldn't have shorts with pockets?

SK: No.

PN: How do you guys swim then?

SK: That easy because we train for it.

PN: You guys wear shorts or anything?

SK: Yeah, swimming shorts. But, in those days, they don't even have the shorts they have now. See? They had from the, you know, strap from



shoulder down all the way. A full swimming suit.

PN: Oh, oh. I saw the old pictures.

SK: Yeah, the full swimming suit.

PN: So, you could hold about what?

SK: Two dollar, two and a half. You know, in the mouth. See, you can put it on both side of the jaw. To do that, you got to, you know, train for it.

PN: What else did you folks do in your spare time like that?

SK: Well, spare time, we had a lot of spare time. We practiced softball. Football season, we play football.

PN: You didn't do any surfing or...

SK: Well, we do surfing only at the old incinerator, right outside of there.

PN: That's the area they call "Stone Wall."

SK: Stone Wall. We don't have surfboards. We use ironboard. You know, the ironboard they use for iron clothes? The small one? Those days used to be small one. That's what we used to use.

PN: It's made out of wood?

SK: Made out of wood.

PN: Wasn't there, you know, by that Healan Boathouse, was there any kind of rowing?

SK: Yeah. They used to have all the yacht race. The rowing races around in Honolulu Harbor.

PN: Who would participate?

SK: Gee, ah. Healan Club. Nui Nalu. Had so many. Only about three or four. I can't remember the name.

PN: But you didn't participate?

SK: No. That's too much work.

(PN laughs)

PN: This is canoe paddling or...



SK: No, ah....

PN: Skulling?

SK: Skulling. Right.

PN: This would be local boys, or haoles, or...

SK: Well, no, all local people. In those days, no more haoles. Just locals.

PN: How would they get these kind of boats?

SK: Oh, they had it already, way before.

PN: Canoe paddling wasn't that popular that period?

SK: No, not popular then. Maybe canoe paddlers the last 20 years came popular. You know?

PN: There was canoe paddling back then, though, eh?

SK: Well, not at the harbor, though.

PN: Oh, they would be someplace else?

SK: Maybe down Waikiki but we don't pay any attention too much, our group, you know?

PN: So, in other words, you'd roam around but just in the Kakaako area?

SK: Kakaako district. Yeah.

PN: From where? What would you call....

SK: Well, from Fort Street up to Kapiolani and Queen Street all the way down to the pier. All the way to the Territorial Building. That's what we call our "hang out."

PN: When did you begin to play football?

SK: 1928. When I was 18 years old. We played the Barefoot, 150 pound. Up to 1933, then I went to Kam Alum. Senior League. Then the Kam Alum disband. Senior League Football (disbanded) in 1938. Then they had a few teams. Then they had this Saint Louis Alumni left. Farrington, McKinley Alumni, then the Polar Bears came in.

PN: Polar Bears?

SK: Yeah, well, we have collegiate stars, eh? Half of them from the mainland college and half from Honolulu. So, they call it the "Polar Bears." The first, Mrs. Topping organize that team. You know, her husband was a lot of money.

PN: But why a wahine?

SK: Well, because, you know, like to sponsor for something.

PN: So, the Senior League would have sponsors?

SK: Well, the town team had Scotty Schumann. The Saint Louis Alumni had their own, I don't know who sponsor them. McKinley Alumni, I don't know who sponsor them.

PN: Let's go back and then let's talk about the Barefoot League. Now, there was the...

SK: Kakaako Sons, Hui Uleu, Olympic and Kalihi.

PN: That's in the 150 pound division?

SK: 150 pound.

PN: In the lower weight division you had...

SK: Ah, in the lower weight, that's 130. Well, I wasn't coaching then, at that time. Gee, they had Nishikia, Kalihi, Moiliili, Kaimuki, Diamond Packers. Gee, I think that was about all, I think.

PN: Punchbowl had a team?

SK: Gee, I don't know if Punchbowl or what, because when I coached the Diamond Packers they never have Punchbowl.

PN: Oh, you coached the Diamond Head Packers? Who's Boulevard A.C.?

SK: Well, I coached them too.

PN: That was another team too?

SK: Yeah. That was 150 pound too. But, during the war, the Boulevard team, the Air Force, the University of Hawaii, you know, it was Saint Louis High School exhibition game. Neal Blaisdell was coaching Saint Louis High School that time, during the War.

PN: So, in Kakaako there was the 125, 135, 150...

SK: No, Kakaako had 135 and 150.

PN: They didn't have any 125 pounds? The Atkinson team had, ah...

SK: 135 pounds.

PN: 135 pounds? They didn't have the 125 pound?

SK: No. Because I wasn't coaching them. I was playing football then. I was playing for Kakaako Sons team.

PN: I see. So you played from 1928 to...

SK: 1943. But then I start coaching about....gee, right about, can't remember when I started but I had about 14 years of coaching. See, I coached the Kakaako Sons after Julian Judd gave up. Then, we turned to Boulevard. I coached that. And, I coached the Diamond Packers at the same time. And then, in 1941 and 1942, I was a line coach for Saint Louis High School. Under Johnny McCogan. Then, I think it's 1946 or 1947, I went up Punahou with Tony Morse. I was a line coach up there. Tony Morse.

PN: So, at this time you were coaching and playing?

SK: Yeah.

PN: That wasn't unusual to have a coach and a player?

SK: No.

PN: Other teams did that too?

SK: Well, I don't know about other teams, ah, I not going worry about the other teams. You know?

PN: And this is all in the 150 pound weight? What happened to ah....the first coach was Julian Judd?

SK: Ah, he died in Long Beach, California.

PN: Oh, I see. And that's when you took over?

SK: No, he just died lately.

PN: Oh, oh.

SK: He just gave up coaching so...

PN: Who organized these Barefoot Leagues?

SK: Well, Henry Yamasaki, Department of Parks and Recreation, former employee there. He started the Barefoot League, the 130 pound and the Senior League, the 150 pound one. Then, he drop out from the 150 pound and he work only on the 130 pound.

PN: Where would you folks practice?

SK: Oh, we had a big park down Atkinson Park. You know where American Factors Warehouse? Right across from Pohukaina School, right below. That was a huge park. Big as that warehouse is...that's the size of the park. One whole block.

PN: And how often would you folks practice?

SK: Everyday. After about 5 o'clock.

PN: And how long would practice be?

SK: Till about 8 o'clock. You like I tell you one good story? Eh? In my class, you know, Hawaiian, Portuguese. We don't eat before practice, always eat after practice. The Japanese football players, they got to go home and eat at 5 o'clock, eh? They got to eat with their parents in those days, right?

PN: Yeah, yeah.

SK: When they get down there they get the works. You know, their stomachs still full, eh? They come down, they practice, they get the works from the coach.

(PN laughs)

SK: You know? See, our coach those days, when you come late for practice, you got to take 15 laps. Around the park, that big park. And the manager's counting the laps.

(PN laughs)

SK: That's why the Japanese football players we used to have, they die out there during practice time. But they don't quit, they come back again even though they have to go home everyday eat at 5 o'clock.

PN: Oh yeah? And when you folks play games?

SK: Our game used to be on Sunday. Sunday afternoon. Honolulu Stadium, we used to play.

PN: Every Sunday at Honolulu Stadium? You folks wouldn't travel around to different parks?

SK: No, no, no. The only team that travels is the 130 pound teams. Park to park.

PN: What part of the year would you guys play football like that?

SK: Same like now. Same season. Same thing.

PN: Approximately how many games did you folks play a year?

SK: Well, there's ah, four teams. Used to play two times a season, twice, that's seven teams. No, six games.

PN: You said you had managers. Was there assistant coaches, line coaches....

SK: Oh yeah. Our assistant coach used to be Norman Kauaihilo, former University of Hawaii player. Albert Naalea, former University of Hawaii player. That used to be our assistant line coachmen.

PN: The head coach would be Julian Judd?

SK: Julian Judd.

PN: Who would be your managers?

SK: Oh, ah, gee, I don't know what his....Charlie Pung. You see, they do all this work all volunteer because, you know, nobody get paid. Even the coaches don't get paid. All volunteer work.

PN: They lived in that area so they come out help the boys out?

SK: Well, not Julian Judd. He used to live Kaimuki. Norman Kauaihilo, I don't know where he was living. Albert Naalea not, but they volunteer to coach.

PN: Oh yeah? Wasn't that unusual they come from Kaimuki to come coach here?

SK: No.

PN: Kaimuki had their own team in the 130 division.

SK: In the 130, yeah.

PN: How many players you folks carried on your guys team?

SK: About 36. Three teams.

PN: But then, you'd have to cut players or...

SK: We don't cut because we lucky we get 36 turnout.

PN: Oh yeah? Why was that? I thought there was plenty, you know....

SK: Oh, you have plenty but, ah, there's the one that if they can't make one team they going run to the other team, eh?

PN: What kind of plays or strategies you folks used?



SK: Oh, we use, oh, all the teams in the league use single wing. Single wing, double wing, all different formations. T-formation.

PN: You guys use that Georgia Tech belly series too?

SK: Oh yeah. When they call belly series, that's only a wedge. They only change the name around. When Dallas go into a shotgun start, that's only a double wingback. That's all it is.

PN: You folks used all those too?

SK: Oh yeah, we used that.

PN: How would you folks get all these plays?

SK: Well, everybody make their own plays. We don't go look in the book...

(PN laughs)

SK: ...for plays, that come by just thinking about it. See? Because you can write play in the book, but if it doesn't work on the field it doesn't do you any good. So, I'm pretty sure most of the coaches, even today, what you call, they must get their plays from the field while they practicing. They running plays and they see something, then they change 'em around to improve it. That's the way we coach.

PN: Did you folks have scouts to check out the...

SK: Nah, we don't have scouts.

PN: You know, other people was telling me that they could challenge if you didn't make the weight limit like that.

SK: Yeah, that's a 130 and 150. See, but the 150, you only scale one week before the season start. See, you 150, you can come out to 175 pound after that.

PN: Oh, you mean just once a year. That's all?

SK: Yeah, once a year. But then, 130 got to scale every Sunday before the game.

PN: So that's what they mean by "challenge" every Sunday. They can challenge one player, see if he's overweight or not?

SK: Well, with the 130, they don't challenge. You know, they got to hit the scale. Everybody got to hit the scale. Henry Yamasaki bring the scale down and he do the checking.

PN: So, if they 150, just once a year?



SK: Yeah, beginning of the season, just before the beginning, 150, and that's it. You can come up to 175 after that, nobody care.

PN: Was there a lot of injuries and things like that because you guys play barefoot?

SK: Not as much as nowadays.

PN: Oh yeah? Were you ever hurt?

SK: Not that I know of.

(PN laughs)

PN: Was it, you know, no broken bones?

SK: No broken bones. No nothing.

PN: What about the rest of the team?

SK: Same thing. We don't have big doctor bills. Not like today.

PN: What's the difference like that?

SK: Well, the difference is today's football players are bigger and stronger. And they have equipment like their headgear. You know? All plastic, eh. You ever run into one of those things?

PN: No.

SK: You run into one of those plastic things, see if you can bend 'em.

PN: Cannot.

SK: Cannot. That's why so many get hurt.

PN: So you guys had no equipment at all?

SK: Oh, we had shoulder pads. But the most...

PN: Oh, this was later on, though. When did shoulder pads come out?

SK: Oh, before that. We had shoulder pad, but you got to furnish your own shoulder pad. Your own headgear. Well, we had leather headgear at that time. See. Just flat. And, against the ear is flat resting against the ear. See? So, never have much so, I don't wear headgear.

PN: What did you wear?

SK: Nothing. Just a little sailor cap.

(PN laughs)

PN: Is that the reason why, in the Barefoot League, very seldom you see people with any kind of equipment, because you have to go buy your own?

SK: Oh, yeah! You got to furnish your own. They don't have hip pad. Some of 'em have hip pad. You know? They play in sailor moku pants.

PN: And that's it? No shoes, nothing. Why was there difference between the Kakaako team--the Kakaako Sons was mixed nationality, and then you had the Atkinson team was composed of mainly Japanese?

SK: Because you never find a Hawaiian boy with 130 pound, or Portuguese. Isn't that right? You never can find one Hawaiian or Portuguese with 130 pound. So with the Japanese boys, yeah, you can find plenty. Once in a great while you find--even when I was coaching the Diamond Packers--130 pound, I know I had a Hawaiian boy and maybe I had a half-Hawaiian. You know? But not pure Hawaiian.

PN: They were bigger that's why.

SK: Yeah.

PN: Was there large crowds at the games like that?

SK: Oh yeah. To us, you get six, 7,000, is a big crowd.

PN: That many people would turn out for...

SK: To watch Barefoot? Oh, yes!

PN: For the 150 pound?

SK: 150 and 130.

PN: Oh yeah? Is that all at the Stadium, though?

SK: The stadium is 150. 130 is outside, you know.

PN: Different parks like that?

SK: Yeah, like Ala Wai Field, old Moiliili Field.

PN: Six, 7,000 would turn out at one small field like that?

SK: That field would be filled. Right around the field.

PN: Why was it so popular?

SK: Because it was a fast football game. Everybody move fast. Because they don't have too much equipment. You know? So, you know, they move fast, faster.

PN: There must have been a lot of rivalry between different teams?

SK: Oh yeah! Lot of rival. You know, the 130 pound and the 150 had a lot of rival.

PN: What would you say was the toughest teams you guys played against?

SK: You mean the 150?

PN: Yeah.

SK: I tell you the truth. That other three teams was tough.

PN: Oh yeah? But, you was coaching and playing, you guys took champions three years in a row?

SK: Ah, no. When Julian Judd was coaching was four years in a row. From 1929 to 1932. We lost a game, you know, in between. But, at the end, well, we win the most.

PN: What made you become a coach like that?

SK: Well, I don't know. Because I love the game and I like to see what, you know, what I can do with coaching. So we organize the Boulevard team. That's where I start coaching, with the Boulevard team. Well, that's when the other, our Barefoot League was disband. See? Then, they start another 150 pound.

PN: Oh, oh, oh. So, the Kakaako Sons disbanded?

SK: Yeah, about 1933.

PN: Who organized the second 150 pound league?

SK: Well, there used to be a service station on Ward and Kapiolani Boulevard. Ricky Kurose. He started that.

PN: He sponsored you folks?

SK: Yeah.

PN: What would he have to do as sponsor?

SK: Well, ah, actually nothing.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

PN: ....What a sponsor would have to do?

SK: A sponsor? Their divisional sponsor don't have to put out any money. You know. Maybe, we tell why we need this, we need that. Because the boys, as I said, get their own equipment. Or maybe we need, what you call, little incidental things to, you know, for the team.... football, tape...

PN: You guys had tackling dummies and stuff like that?

SK: Human being was the tackling dummy.

(PN laughs)

SK: You see, in those days, we never have equipment as today. So, everything the human being got to be the dummy.

PN: As sponsor, you folks would wear a shirt or a uniform?

SK: No, but as a team we get a uniform. We get a color.

PN: Oh, what was you folks' color?

SK: I think our color was blue.

PN: They don't wear like nowadays, you know, they would see somebody with Boulevard A.C. on the back of their shirt?

SK: No, no. Can't afford to put those things on the shirt.

PN: He wouldn't buy you folks beer or something, food after the game?

SK: No, because those days football players, they play for the love of the game. You know? They just want to play football. They don't ask the sponsors for anything. But, the boys get together, buy their own beer, then they sit down and drink at the service station, with the manager. I'm pretty sure the rest of the teams do the same. The league.

PN: You know, when you were coaching, did you have any assistants under you?

SK: Just one.

PN: Who was that?

SK: Ah, Ed Ho. I think he died already.

PN: The Ho family?

SK: Yeah.

PN: James Ho?

SK: No, no. Tai Loy Ho. Ah, Bob Ho.

PN: You said you folks used to practice and then eat?

SK: Yeah, you got to eat afterward.

PN: Where did you folks eat?

SK: Everybody go home and eat. You know?

PN: You said you played baseball, too?

SK: Well, only for two seasons. Played for the Hawaiians. Those days they used to get the Hawaiian, Chinese, you know. I used to play for the Hawaiians Junior. We used to play at the old Cartwright Field. That's in Makiki.

PN: What position did you play?

SK: Second base.

PN: You'd play the Chinese team and the Japanese team...

SK: Yeah, Hawaiian team. Get Japanese, you know, Portuguese team.

PN: Had one Filipino team, too?

SK: Gee, never have Filipinos that time.

PN: Oh yeah? What year did you play?

SK: Gee, in the early 1930's.

PN: Was there a haole team too?

SK: Well, not the haoles, but then the Senior baseball had the Wanderers.

PN: Oh, oh. You played for the Junior team?

SK: Yeah, Hawaiian Junior.

PN: What's the difference between the Senior and Junior?

SK: Well, there was a Senior League and they have a Junior League for all the different nationalities. See? Like the Hawaiians, the Chinese, the Braves. You know? We're this Junior, see?



PN: This is younger boys?

SK: Yeah, younger boys. The older guys and Ensui Pang, all of them was playing in the stadium. The Chinese. Johnny Kerr, all of them.

PN: Who was you folks' coach?

SK: Ah, George Cummings.

PN: This league was, how was it run? This was like the part of the Parks and Recreation?

SK: No, no. Actually, they had their own committee. Those days, you know, somebody just think about making a league and then they make up one committee themselves. Couple committees and they form a league.

PN: They'd be made up of all Hawaiians?

SK: Yeah, all the Hawaiians. The Portuguese was called the Braves. Chinese, Chinese.

PN: The Japanese team was the Asahis?

SK: Yeah.

PN: How many people you guys carried on you guys' team?

SK: Oh, we lucky we get 20.

PN: Oh yeah? You get tryouts?

SK: Yeah. But if you don't have 20 on the team, easier to make the team, eh?

(PN laughs)

SK: Even if you one scrub you can chance.

PN: How did you do on the team?

SK: Not too good. I was a poor hitter. Fielding, I was all right, but a hitter, I was poor.

PN: I forgot to ask you what position you played on the Kakaako Sons football team?

SK: Center, all the way through.

PN: What about, you know, had referees? You know, going back to football.

SK: Oh yeah. We had Adrian DeMello, Red Zimmerman, Skeet Swan, Ted Nobriga. All them.



PN: These people would be paid or something, or they be part of...

SK: Well, they get paid but not too much. You know? I would only say about \$10 a day a game. (Laughs) But, you must remember, \$10 was \$10. I'm not sure how much they got paid but....

PN: What kind of rules or anything like that you guys followed?

SK: Same rules as now.

PN: College rules like that? On the fumble you can advance the ball...

SK: In those days, fumble you can advance. Everything that the football rule call at that time, that's the rule the league follow. Everything but fighting.

(Laughter)

PN: Would you folks use any kind of tricks, or...

SK: Well, we had more tricks in those days than now.

PN: What kine did you folks use?

SK: Well, we used to have double reverse, triple reverse, pass lateral. Ah, the blocking the same as now. Only we run a lot of pass lateral. Did you see University (of Hawaii) game, Saturday?

PN: Yeah, I saw the highlights. Yeah.

SK: You saw the pass lateral?

PN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SK: We used to get that.

PN: "Flea-flicker" they call it.

SK: We used to get that.

PN: What about as far as blocking like that? I hear they use leg whips.

SK: Leg swing. Those days we used to use leg swing.

PN: Now, it's illegal, though?

SK: Now, it's illegal.

PN: You folks had anything else like that? As far as, you know, trying to take advantage of the other opponent like that.

SK: Well, ah, you see, those days when you run your ball you go up to the five yards to the sideline. You got to play the ball from there. Now, they move 'em to the inside 15 yard (from the sideline) line. Right? So in those days, when you come to the five yard line, you got to play the ball from there. Or from two yards from the outside, you got to play the ball from there.

PN: Where the ball ends up, you play it from there?

SK: Yeah, you play that. In those days, what you call, we used to get lot of tricks. The plays way to the left, over there, the right end don't come in. He hide on the sideline, or on the side. See? Then, we call the pass play, then throw pass to him because he the only one down there. That's only good for one time. One or two times, but after that they catch you. You know, they wide awake for it. And the 130 pound does the same thing because the crowd is so close...

PN: Cannot see the player along the sideline.

SK: Cannot see the player, eh? We had harder time playing football before than now because when the ball get on the two yard line and if you in the balance formation, you cannot line up three guys to the left. See? Even with single wing, you get hard time line up two guys to the left of that, or the right, whatever it is. But now, they move 'em back 15 yards....inside the field.

PN: On defense, I guess you guys played both ways, right? Offensive and defensive.

SK: Well, yeah. Those days, once you come out of the game you cannot go back till the next quarter. So everybody got to play two ways.

PN: Oh, I see. How would you line up defensively?

SK: Same as now. Six men, five men. You know, we get all that already in there. We even had four man line.

PN: You guys didn't line up nose to nose kine?

SK: Well, it all depend what kind of formation they get. See? Nose, or in the puka. Because we never do anything different from now. You know? We do almost the same thing. Because lot of people think in our day, we play football, it's altogether different from now. No. It's almost the same.

PN: Just that you guys had less equipment.

SK: Yeah, they talk about these zone passes. We had that. We had zone and man-to-man defense. So these guys are not pulling off nothing new.

PN: Same thing then?

SK: Well, it's new to guys that, you know, start football, or you know...

PN: Never played football.

SK: Yeah. But to us, it's nothing new.

PN: Would there be a lot of fighting?

SK: Oh yeah. But, you see, in those days we fight a lot. You know? On the field. And after the game, we shake hand, and pau. You see? If you in a game you trying your best. You know? So, you get into a hassle with a guy so you going after him, he's going after you. But after the game, we all shake hand and forget it.

PN: No fights after the game?

SK: No fights after the game.

PN: Was there fighting among the fans?

SK: No, no. But, before my days, before I start playing football, I think. I don't know, was a game over at McKinley High School, Barefoot League. This guy Melim. I don't know what Melim that is. I think he used to own the service station. He was a good runner. He was a, you know, he was a good runner, see? But I was a little bit, oh, about 15 years old. I went and watched the game. I think they didn't like his officiating, you know. After the game, they wen chase him. They couldn't catch him. They wanted to lick him.

PN: He was one referee? (Laughs)

SK: Yeah, he was a referee. But, they couldn't catch him.

PN: He was faster than...

SK: He was gone. I think you looking now, but you talk to him. I bet he would laugh about it.

(Laughter)

PN: What made Kakaako get such a reputation as being a "rough" district?

SK: Well, that's a good question because you go any place, you know, anybody, what do you call, it's like gang. You have a gang. Just like what they having how. You don't like somebody come in your district and bully you around. Because if you mind your own business nobody bother you. You don't have no trouble. But you have people from outside come into your district and looking for trouble. Well, you got to protect yourself. Down there, you always have gang fight. You know? Between different districts. Kakaako, from Kalihi, you know? But not fight to kill. Fight, that's all. You know?

PN: Would you--you know, your group, gang, or whatever you call yourselves--you guys would go over to Palama or Kalihi?

SK: Well, ah, I was a little bit small boy that time. About 15, 16. But I used to see them march to Kalihi. The whole gang, Kakaako district. And that's not only 20. That's about 100-something.

PN: They just went up to there and...

SK: They would walk. In those days no more car. You figure 1926, 1927 like that. They don't have automobile like now.

PN: Was this often that you would see...

SK: No, not too often. I think all my life I live down there, I think I only saw once.

PN: Gang fight?

SK: Yeah, you know, never fight yet. But they was marching towards Kalihi already.

PN: Would guys from Kalihi or Palama come inside Kakaako and...

SK: No, not that I know of. Never once.

PN: You said you worked for the City and County in 1931.

SK: Garbage Department.

PN: How did you get that job?

SK: Those days, you no need to take Civil Service test.

PN: So you just went down and applied?

SK: Yeah.

PN: What did they pay you?

SK: \$4 a day.

PN: And what would you have to do like that?

SK: You see, those days, when you work in the Garbage Department--the Road Department I was working first, \$4 a day. See? But, in the Garbage Department, you work for \$90 a month. And you work three weeks and one week rest.

PN: Oh yeah? What did you do? Just go around...

SK: Yeah, hauling rubbish just like the way they do now. But we just used to get a truck. You had to pick up the rubbish and throw it on top. Not like right now, they just pick it up and put it in the back. See?

PN: Yeah. So you throw 'em over the fence around the truck?

SK: Yeah, yeah. Throw it to a man who's on top. Then, he spread the rubbish and throw the can back to us.

PN: What districts did you guys cover?

SK: Well, on Sundays we'd cover Kapahulu area. On Monday, go up Nuuanu. And Tuesday, where the hell we would go? Down Kakaako side.

PN: And how many hours a day would you folks work?

SK: Ah, on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, we work about 12 hours.

PN: Each day?

SK: Each day because there's so much rubbish. We start 6 o'clock in evening, continue till the next morning. But then, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, the hours are shortened because there's less rubbish. Maybe, we'll go five hours, that's all. See, we used to ukupau. You know? The quicker you finish, the better for you.

PN: So, you guys really worked only the first three days then?

SK: Yeah, worked 12 hours, but then, the next three days we make up for it. See? You know? Those days, we don't have union like now. In those days, if had union, we clean up the first three days.

(Laughter)

SK: We make plenty money.

PN: How many guys would be in you guys'...

SK: Ah, with the driver, four. The driver and three helpers. One guy on top, two below.

PN: How many of these teams would go out?

SK: Well, how much I don't know because....I don't know how many team because we not worried about the other district. You know, there's lot of districts. Kalihi side...

PN: Oh, oh. And this shop wherever you guys operated from, where was this located?

SK: In the old incinerator. You know where the old incinerator?



PN: Yeah.

SK: That was used to be our yard, right before the incinerator.

PN: You folks dumped your rubbish over there?

SK: Over there.

PN: That's all the back fill area over there?

SK: All the back fill area in there now. Only incinerator they had over there. You know, in the 1930's.

PN: When you quit, that was what, 1941?

SK: Yeah, when the war started. Well, I went to the Board of Water Supply. I work there one year. And the war started. I quit and I went down to the Navy Yard. Work for the contractor, Pacific Bridge.

PN: How much were you getting when you left the City?

SK: When I went to the Board of Water Supply, I was making \$100 a month.

PN: You mean you never had a raise at the City and County Garbage Department from when you started to when you quit? \$90 a month?

SK: \$90 a month. And that's it.

PN: 10 years and no raise?

SK: No, I work there four years. Yeah. And one year at Board of Water Supply.

PN: Oh. I thought you worked from 1931 to 1941?

SK: No, no. I work not far as 1931. Later than that.

PN: Oh, I see. That's after you got married?

SK: Yeah. Forced to work, eh?

(Laughter)

SK: Got to support the wife and the kid, eh?

PN: You met your wife where?

SK: Kakaako. She's from Kakaako.

PN: She's Kakaako girl then?



SK: Yeah.

PN: When did you get married?

SK: Gee, 1932, I think. Yeah, my son is 40-something now.

PN: Did you have any hardships during this time when you got married?  
You know, these early years, 1932? That was around the depression.

SK: Well, not too bad. See, house rent those days was \$10 to \$15 a month.  
So, I'm making \$90 a month. Those days, you don't pay electricity.  
The landlord pay electricity.

PN: So, where were you living?

SK: Kakaako.

PN: Kakaako? What part of Kakaako?

SK: Oh, on Queen Street. I was renting a two-bedroom house for \$15 a month.

PN: Oh yeah? Cheap, eh? I wanted to ask you another question. You know,  
a lot of these sport people, they play and then they get offers to  
work for companies where they get sports like that. You didn't get  
any, you know...

SK: No. I know what you mean.

PN: That was common practice, eh?

SK: Well, it was common practice. Yeah. But, you must remember, they  
only pick on the high school graduate or college graduate. If you  
think back, all those guys hold good jobs is the high school or college  
graduate. Because guys like us, when you only go to the eighth grade  
and that's it.

PN: They don't hire you guys?

SK: They figure you don't have enough education.

END OF INTERVIEW.

# **REMEMBERING KAKA'AKO: 1910-1950**

## **Volume I**

**Center for Oral History  
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